

AN INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The Institute of Human Relations at Yale is an organization for the co-operative study of man. Research in the biological sciences and their applications in medicine is here connected, through psychology, with research in the social sciences and their applications in law. The Institute is a co-ordination and expansion, made possible by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, of previously established mental-hygiene work, the Institute of Psychology, and the Department of Research in Child Hygiene. Research is the primary object, although graduate seminars overlapping the boundary lines of the traditional disciplines will be provided. The task of co-ordinating research projects and eliminating duplication is so difficult that increased centralization in administration may be necessary. The first project approved is a five-year study by Dr. William Healy and Dr. Augusta F. Bronner of the family factors in child adjustment. The interest of the medical and law schools in the Institute has its origin in the new conceptions of preventive medicine and preventive law, which require practitioners to have a better understanding of the people and society in which they live. The experience in co-operative research should be useful to social scientists, psychologists, and other specialists in freeing them from their departmental rigidities and broadening their understanding of human relations.

Some years ago the Yale Medical School wished to make a start in psychiatry. The plan called for a psychopathic hospital, to be financed in part by the state. Since the state did not desire to assume this burden, the project was abandoned. Yale University, shortly after the collapse of the original idea, secured \$50,000 a year for a period of years from the Commonwealth Fund for mental hygiene work, principally among the students. Although this work was reasonably successful, it was felt that it was not based on the research which an intelligent program required, nor was it integrated with many phases of the University's activities to which it was obviously related.

Three years ago, therefore, the Medical School proposed an Institute of Human Behavior, calling for a research staff in psychiatry, research beds in psychiatry, the continuation of the mental hygiene program, and close co-operation with the Institute of Psychology and the Department of Research in Child Hygiene. The additional facilities required for this plan were in psychiatry alone. The Institute of Psychology had been in existence for two years. It was composed of an experimental psychologist, a com-

parative psychologist, and an anthropologist interested in the psychological possibilities of his field. The Department of Research in Child Hygiene, otherwise known as the Yale Psycho-Clinic, had for some years been doing important work on the normal development of the preschool child. The Institute and the Department were separate geographically and administratively from each other and from the Medical School. The scheme of the Institute of Human Behavior, therefore, called for a building bringing all these interests under one roof, and for an organization which would enable them to operate effectively as a unit.

Although it was at one time thought that the funds for this development were certain to be forthcoming, a number of unexpected obstacles appeared which delayed the project. Meanwhile, the Law School had been manifesting an interest in socializing the law. It was felt that the School was under no obligation to add to the number of lawyers of admirable technical competence but no ideas. In order to focus the work of students and faculty on the place and function of the law in society, a political scientist, an economist, and a psychologist were added to the staff of the Law School. Younger members of the staff were encouraged to study at New Haven and abroad in the social sciences. Much non-legal material was added to the Law Library. The faculty availed itself of every opportunity to co-operate with the social science group in the University, finally adding two professors of that group to its own number.

Obviously the Medical School and the Law School were tending toward the same center, the study of human behavior. It was somewhat remarkable that this should be so; for medical schools have in the past been chiefly concerned with diseases rather than with the people who have them, and law schools have not traditionally believed that they had any concern with people at all. Their sole duty they conceived to be the analysis of statutes and judicial opinions, a process which presumably gave the student a "legal mind," or taught him, as the irreverent put it, to "make a noise like a lawyer." Perhaps, however, the shift in emphasis at Yale was only superficially unusual. The conception of preventive medicine leads to the conception of health as a positive attribute. And

this in turn leads to the study of the whole individual as a social animal. It will not be long before the conception of preventive law gains an equally strong hold on the law schools; for it is already the conception of the practicing branch of the profession. The lawyer's chief job today is not to patch up pathological cases, but to advise men in their social, economic, and political relations so that they may avoid ill health. And this means, too, that the lawyer must understand people and the society in which they live.

This tendency on the part of the Schools of Law and Medicine at Yale to come together in the study of human behavior became concrete in the suggestion that the social sciences and the law should be added to the Institute which had been proposed and which seemed indefinitely postponed. The hope was that this larger program would make a greater appeal to the foundations than the narrower scheme, and this hope was not disappointed. The plan as finally presented called for an organization which might unite on the study of man, bringing to bear on him the resources and techniques of the biological sciences with their applied aspects as represented in medicine, and the social sciences with their applied aspects as represented in law. In the center, clearly enough, is psychology, the connecting link between the biological and the social sciences. The project called for the continuation of the mental hygiene work, the Institute of Psychology, and the Psycho-Clinic. The additional funds requested were for the introduction of work in psychiatry in the Medical School, for research beds in psychiatry, for research in the social sciences, and for a building housing psychiatry, the Institute of Psychology, the Department of Research in Child Hygiene, and new research workers in the social sciences.

The Rockefeller Foundation granted this request in January last. Immediately an executive committee of the Institute was organized consisting of the President, the Deans of the Medical, Law, and Graduate Schools, and the Chairman of the Departments of Psychology and Social Science. The committee determined to center the work of the Institute at the outset on the Family. It felt that this field was broad enough to give the various interests ample scope, and at the same time narrow enough to prevent the investi-

gations from becoming too diffuse. The first investigation approved was one proposed by the Law School, a study under the direction of Dr. William Healy and Dr. Augusta F. Bronner of the family factors in child adjustment. This project will be carried out simultaneously in Boston and New Haven over a five-year period. The Law School was particularly interested in it because it enters upon two fields in which legal teaching and research have been inadequate, the field of family law and the field of crime and juvenile delinquency. The other groups in the Institute saw in the study problems and material of value to them. Plans are now being drawn for a study of the economics of the family, which will parallel the Healy-Bronner investigation, and during the summer and fall other projects will be developed rounding out the Institute's work in the Family. Meanwhile, the Dean of the Medical School is gathering a psychiatric staff.

So much for a chronological account of the history of the idea of the Institute of Human Relations up to the present time. Now that the money is in hand and a starting point agreed upon, what long-range objectives have the Institute's sponsors in mind, and what lessons have they learned from its operation so far?

When the Yale Law School discovered that the law was a social science, it found that it needed the help of people trained in the other social sciences. When the Yale Medical School decided that it wanted to consider the individual in society, it felt the same need. What could be done about it? The men working in the social sciences and psychology had their own special fields and their own special lines of research in these fields to which they were committed. It was difficult for some of them to see any relation between their work and that of these notoriously predatory professional schools. But even if they could see it, their departmental responsibilities were such that it was hard for them to take on new obligations that were, to say the least, unconventional. Departmental favor ordinarily depends on doing a departmental job in the good old departmental way. And few men can afford to do without departmental favor. If the professional schools and those men in the other departments who were interested were to work together, some organization was necessary which should be a sort of super-

department, cutting across departmental lines and allowing the freest possible intercourse among members of existing departments. No one thought that men could be coerced into co-operation. But everybody thought that men who wanted to co-operate should receive every encouragement to do so. The Institute now has a large staff, serving for the present in an advisory capacity, composed of all the men in the University who were interested in the Institute and who may have something to contribute to it. This is now the only University body which is representative of diverse schools and departments in any but a purely formal way. If the Institute does nothing else but break down departmental barriers, bringing together men of common tastes and inclinations, placing at the disposal of each the resources of the other, and at the disposal of students the total resources of the University, it will have been worth the effort and expense that have gone into it.

For the results of removing departmental rigidities should be important, both in teaching and research. The investigators in the Institute will be primarily investigators. But the hope is that they will wish to conduct seminars for all qualified students from any department represented in the Institute, and will supervise the researches of such students. The schools and departments in turn will regard this work as done under their own jurisdiction (for all Institute appointees are members of one or more departments) and will not scorn a man for having done it. Thus at the outset students of the Family, in whatever division of the University they are nominally enrolled, will have open to them such graduate work in the Institute as they are able to handle. Next fall law students, divinity students, medical students, and students of the social sciences will be working with Healy and Bronner for their respective degrees.

The Institute is thought of now as exclusively a graduate and research venture. One may hope that this will not always be so. There is an opportunity to vitalize undergraduate education through permitting able juniors and seniors in the College to take up work in the Institute under men who are attempting to study contemporary problems face to face. Association with mature students, work under a flexible curriculum, and removal from the

collegiate atmosphere can bring nothing but benefit to the undergraduate.

The teaching that is done in the Institute, whether by formal classes or supervision of research, will perhaps do something to produce a new kind of man. The atmosphere in many law schools has been that attributed to the tribunal of a fictitious English judge, who according to A. P. Herbert told the jury, "In this court we are not concerned with private life or public life, but with the law, which has not much relation to either." Medicine has been removed from life through preoccupation in recent years with laboratory experiment, which, though of the utmost value, has failed to give the physician that insight into human situations which his profession pre-eminently requires. Nor can it be said that the social sciences and psychology have been altogether free from that remoteness which has characterized law and medicine. All the investigations of the Institute will be field investigations. They will be investigations bringing together men of ability irrespective of the trade name of their departments. And they will all center on human relations. It may be possible under these conditions to produce men with a broad understanding of human nature as well as an adequate understanding of the technique and scope of some specialty.

This last statement is of course a prophecy, and open to all the infirmities of prognostication. No one really knows whether men can be prepared for the bar examinations or the state medical examinations by the type of education afforded in the Institute and the affiliated schools. My own guess is that they can be. But if they can't, who cares? Let them prepare themselves for those examinations if they wish to take them. If they cannot do so, they merely indicate that they have not the ability which should be required for entrance upon this sort of curriculum.

A final development that the founders of the Institute had in mind is of course obvious enough: the development of co-operative research in all the fields relating to man. Here the experimental nature of the whole scheme is at once clear. It rests on co-operative research. Nobody knows whether co-operative research on such a scale is possible or even desirable. From the beginning the plan

has been attacked as grandiose. The answer has been that aside from new resources in the social sciences and psychiatry there is no enlargement of what Yale already possessed; the Institute is simply an attempt to bring existing interests together so that they may work in harmony if they will. Will they? That remains to be seen, and depends, of course, on the human relations in the Institute. At present these promise well enough to relieve the donors of the charge of recklessness. And if the men interested in the Institute do co-operate one may feel reasonably sure that, whatever the hazards of co-operative research, the effort will be illuminating and instructive to the scholarly world.

Some changes in organization will probably be necessary. One has already been made. When the executive committee came into being it had no executive head, nor was there anyone who was giving the major portion of his time to looking after the details of its affairs. Mr. Donald Slesinger, assistant professor of law, has now been made executive secretary of the Institute, and has already done much to obviate the necessity for the endless conferences which minor matters in the early stages required. More radical changes in organization are perhaps desirable. Although the Institute will be devoted to work in the field, no member of the Yale faculty has ever had sufficient experience in such work to pass intelligently on projects submitted or correlate them after they are in operation. What is needed is a director of field investigations, who shall see to it that the studies proceed without duplication and with some degree of co-ordination. He might have as his associates a statistician, a social worker of broad training, and a man from some field of social investigation not otherwise represented. This task of correlation will be one of the most difficult the Institute will have to face. The present machinery is hardly equal to it.